

Las Vegas Goes Wireless

Transit Agency Serving Las Vegas Uses Automatically Downloaded Health Reports to Minimize Video Surveillance Downtime

Managing and maintaining mobile video surveillance systems on hundreds of public transit buses can be a real headache without wireless connectivity. Just ask John Neville, Technical Systems Supervisor with the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada.



Before it began acquiring March Networks® Mobile DVRs, transportation commission contractors had to physically board a bus and connect a laptop to the recorder to download video evidence. Keeping track of equipment performance was even more of a challenge.

“With our older systems, we have to rely on the operator to let us know if there is an issue with a recorder,” said Neville. “They do this through a series of LED lights on the dash. If the LED is green, the system is operational and everything is running correctly. If it’s green and red, there’s a system problem. It doesn’t tell us what the problem is. We have to physically send out a technician to troubleshoot it.”

“We rely on the operator to notify us and there were just too many occasions where there would be an incident and our contractor would come and tell us that they went out to download the video, but the system wasn’t recording.”

The transportation commission’s newest generation of recorders with wireless networking capability solves both problems.

When the 170 buses equipped with March Networks 5412 mobile recorders return to one of the commission’s two service depots at the end of a run, the recorders will automatically transmit video clips tagged by either the operator or the system administrator. It also transmits health status reports detailing any issues relating to hard drive or camera performance.

“I didn’t think we’d ever reach this level of technology for a transit fleet,” said Neville. “I’m just happy to see it in my lifetime. It’s quite astounding.”

Automatically downloading video will save the commission’s contractors time and money, while the health check reporting will assist in ensuring that any issues with the recording systems are promptly addressed.

“The system notifies someone immediately through an email that there’s a problem, and it tells you what the problem is. It allows us to get on top of it as soon as the coach returns to the yard.”

The Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada’s public transit authority serves the 1.9 million

people living in Las Vegas and surrounding communities and the 39 million tourists who flock to the entertainment capital of the world every year. Its 372 fixed route buses and 254 paratransit vehicles carry more than 64 million riders per year. In addition to its public transit responsibilities, the commission also serves as the transportation planning agency for Southern Nevada.

Video surveillance is used by the commission’s contractors to manage the usual risks associated with operating a public transit system, said Sandra Stanko, director of transit services.

“It’s used on our paratransit systems to record evidence of slips and falls and to make sure that wheelchairs are properly secured. Video evidence is used by contractors on our fixed routes to mitigate their exposure to liability claims and to determine who is at fault in the event of a traffic accident. It also serves as a deterrent and helps to ensure the safety and security of passengers and operators,” said Stanko.

Specifications for the commission’s newest generation video surveillance system



The Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada

The Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada is both the transit authority and the transportation-planning agency for Southern Nevada. The transit system consists of 37 routes served by more than 350 vehicles carrying more than 190,000 passengers per weekday in the greater Las Vegas Valley.

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were identified as part of the procurement process for its buses, eliminating the need for the commission itself to evaluate and test vendor offerings.

“We knew we wanted a system with wireless connectivity,” said Neville. “Beyond that, we were looking for quick download speeds – we wanted to be able to download an hour’s worth of video in 20 minutes. We also wanted a system with large storage capacity to ensure that the video would still be there if a customer came to us with a slip and fall claim three days after the fact.”

The March Networks recorders on its paratransit vehicles record video from three cameras and provide 90 days of onboard storage. Recording systems on the commission’s fixed route buses, including its distinctive double-deck coaches, are equipped with between seven and 11 cameras, and still provide in excess of three or four weeks of stored video.

“That’s plenty of time for us to investigate an issue,” said Neville.

The commission’s fleet of 130 double-deck buses can accommodate up to 97 passengers and are used on the Strip, as well as on high-capacity routes serving commuters.

Neville advises transit authorities acquiring or upgrading video surveillance systems to “sit down as a group, determine your needs and look at all of the options that are out there. I may be looking for one thing as a maintenance supervisor, but the risk manager would be looking for something entirely different. Even the vehicle manufacturer will want to have input because some systems are easier to install than others. And, your IT staff definitely needs to be in the picture.”

Neville credits the commission’s senior management for recognizing the importance of a state-of-the-art video surveillance system.

“There are a lot of people in the industry I talk to who would like to have more support from the executive level. It’s important to have video surveillance on a transit fleet and I feel fortunate that here in Las Vegas we’ve always had the support of senior management.” ✨

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